1. **Why Janusz Korczak and Yitzhak Katzenelson**

The Twentieth century left humanity with despairing memories. Perhaps the legacy of people like Janusz Korczak and Yitzhak Katzenelson can serve as anchors of hope, a beacon that guides us into a better world.

The growth of human civilization has faced many threats since the start of the twentieth century: global wars and genocides, unprecedented human slaughter in two world wars, the dark shadow of the Jewish Holocaust, the presence of the atomic bomb and the constant threat of apocalyptic nuclear war, religious fanaticism and world terror fueled by religious radicalism, global waves of refugees, pushed out of their homes by political violence and economic crisis. These events paint a troubling picture of our world, in which shadows loom over human potential. That dark presence in our consciousness endangers our belief in the basic goodness of human beings and the ability to work for a better world.

Auschwitz, the peak of human demonic creativity in the twentieth century, marked the loss of our moral orientation. Its appalling reality – an industrial complex of death – shatters our basic trust of human morality. Civilized, educated men committed the worst crimes imaginable. They used the words "good" and "evil," spoke about human decency, and even led family lives near the camp. Yet such apparent normalcy did not stop their crimes. This case forces us to question the very legitimacy and effectiveness of any moral discourse. Language was no longer a reliable representation of reality.[[1]](#footnote-1) The world literally went out of its mind.

1. Steiner, 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)